



# Thaddeus Kostrubala — A pet's best friend

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Laboratory employee Thaddeus (“Tadz”) Kostrubala walks into his home in La Mesilla, a pet carrier clutched in one hand. Greeted by his wife, four dogs and four cats, he sits down on the living room floor and opens the carrier. A wide-eyed three-legged kitten slinks out uncertainly. The young kitten has been through a lot. Homeless during the dead of winter, he sought warmth in a car’s engine. Sadly, when the car was started, the kitten’s hind leg got caught in the fan belt. A good samaritan brought the severely injured kitten to [Española Humane](#), where the shelter’s veterinary team performed an emergency leg amputation and then sent him home with Tadz’s family to foster back to health.

With the help of Kostrubala’s friendly cats and dogs, this temporary guest soon starts to feel at home, running about and being very much a cat, albeit one with only three legs. Then the moment comes, when this cat climbs onto Kostrubala’s lap, settles in and starts to purr.

“Animals are such amazing creatures,” says Kostrubala, who works with the Engineering Project Delivery group. “We humans would be in remorse for losing a limb—we’re going to take time to deal with it. But there’s no such transition with animals. He acts just like our other cats, running about with equal vigor. That’s what I love about animals—they give back to us by showing humans how it’s possible to overcome obstacles and simply be happy with life.”

For the past 20 years or so, Kostrubala and his wife have served as foster caregivers for all types of homeless pets, principally dogs and cats, although Kostrubala remembers one case in which they took in a chicken and another where they helped an orphaned foal.

## Rescuing stray animals

It was while working as a professional engineer on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in southern Idaho and northern Nevada that he first started rescuing stray animals.

“Like most rural areas, there tend to be more accidental or unwanted litters of dogs and cats out there,” explains Kostrubala. “So, my wife and I started to rescue many of these stray animals, giving them a temporary home. We then reached out to the surrounding communities and rescues to spay and neuter the pets and place them in what we call their ‘forever homes.’ That’s basically how our rescue work got started.”

After a couple of years, Kostrubala and his wife moved to New Mexico, where they continued their affinity for rescuing stray animals. “When we came to La Mesilla about 16 years ago, we joined the board for the Española Valley Humane Society, which is now known as Española Humane,” he says. “We volunteered as board members, and today we continue to serve as foster caregivers for homeless pets. We foster litters of neonate bottle babies too young for adoption, help socialize scared or traumatized pets, and nurse dogs and cats through critical care after emergency surgeries.”

## **Rehabilitating animals—it’s pretty easy**

“Fostering homeless pets makes them much more adoptable. In a relaxed foster home environment, particularly one with other pets in it and people willing to spend time nurturing and training them, these animals transform before your eyes in just a few weeks. What you turn over to their new adoptive ‘forever parents’ is a well-adjusted, relaxed and loving pet.”

One of the biggest benefits of being a foster caregiver for homeless pets is what Kostrubala calls “instant rewards.”

“Foster animals bring great happiness and satisfaction that you are doing something good,” he says. “There’s nothing quite like watching an animal come out of its shell or just being happy to be around you. These loving animals, they’re giving your happiness back to you.”

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